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Guess I'll post it...That was fun (All pictures are from the Thai translation, here)...I might do the next visual novel, "A Traveler's Tale - You" and the KnT "Special booklet I and II" stories next when I have time, after that... well, we'll see.

Kino no Tabi/Kino's Journey

Kioku no Kuni —Their Memories
The Country of Memories —Their Memories

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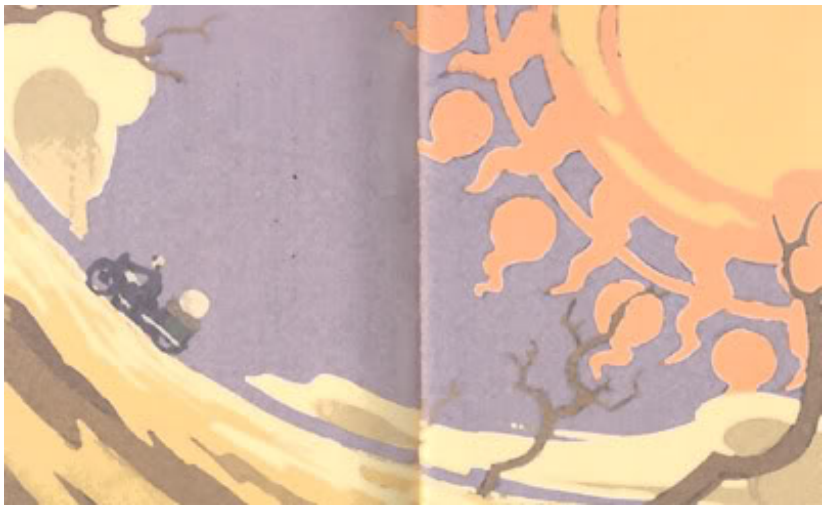
Do you remember what you've forgotten? — Don't forget to forget!



"So, the reason we came here is...?"

In response to the motorrad's (Note: A motorrad is a two wheeled vehicle. Not something which flies in the sky) question, the driver answered

"I said that there wasn't one already. I just felt like coming here. A while ago, someone went here on a whim and told me that it was a beautiful place, so..."

On the top and side of the vehicle were fully loaded with bags, boxes, extra fuel, and other travel luggage. The driver was wearing a black vest over a white shirt,
a hat with flaps which covered the ears, and had goggles over her eyes.
She looked fairly young, around 15 or so.

On the driver's right side was a holster for a Hand Persuader (Note: A Persuader is a firearm, in this case, a handgun.) and in it, a large caliber revolver.
In another holster on the back of her waist lay one more gun, an automatic pistol.
The motorrad ran along on the straight road of dried dirt.

They came to a peak and suddenly there was nothing but the brilliant Sun and the dark blue sky. Wherever you looked, there was a wide, barren, brown expanse of earth, dotted with bushes and shrubs which tinted it with color. Shaking in the heat haze, the straight dirt road ahead became hard to make out.

"So, anyone who said that travelers commonly visit this abandoned-looking country must not have been too serious when they said it, Kino."

Said the motorrad. The driver who was called Kino nodded and said

"Or maybe the people who lived here loved to gossip among themselves and never liked to give outsiders a warm welcome, so eventually, everyone left and now travelers are free to explore the remains of the buildings of this country. The water and food being plentiful, it became a very easy place to live, I'm guessing."

"Hmph!"

"So that's why, Hermes. I've come all this way, so I don't think we should leave without exploring this place a little more."
After Kino's explanation, the motorrad called Hermes grumbled his consent.

In the unchanging scenery, after having gone for a while, Hermes sighed and said

"It's a reason, but really!"

"But really?"

"What if someone with a revolver comes and, upset that we helped ourselves without permission, decides to go on a shooting rampage or something?"

"Ha ha ha"

Underneath the goggles, Kino's eyes narrowed and her mouth formed into a smile.
Then her mouth quickly stiffened and said the following in the tone of one greeting the bereaved family at a funeral.

"That frankness is unacceptable, Hermes!"

"Yeah, Sorry"

At the end of the road, and also from the edge of the horizon, fort walls came into view.
As they kept going, greyness, a huge structure, the way it was made out of stone,
the main gate, all kept becoming clearer, one after the next.
The gate had no door, and the guardhouse to the side had no one guarding it.

"It looks like no one really *is* in this place."
Said Hermes. Without stopping Hermes, Kino rode through the gate slowly.
The gate was large and wide.
After the gentle curve, something large came into view.
As they went through the gate, refreshing winds behind them, the green countryside spread out before their eyes.

"Ah!" "Amazing, isn't it?"

Kino and Hermes both exclaimed, at the same time.

Inside the country was greener than anything either of them had seen before.
The road leading from the gate to the center of the country was lined with trees,
and there were still running waterways on both sides of the road. The houses they spotted were overgrown with shrubs.
Kino shifted while stopping Hermes. As soon as Kino shut Hermes' engine off to save fuel, the only sound that could be heard was the sound of the wind in the trees. In the only house which could be seen between the greenery, there were no signs of people. The deserted stone house stood there silently. The windowpane had deteriorated to the point where it was falling apart. The yard had not only weeds, but even trees had strongly grown up from the earth.

"I wonder why..."

"Who knows..."

And once again, Kino and Hermes exchanged words which held no answers.
Kino turned on the engine and began to drive along the main road.
The street lamps and traffic lights which weren't turned on hovered above, as they passed through.
While they were driving,

"This place is pretty nice, isn't it? There's no one here, but at least finding something to eat here won't be a problem."

Kino said while looking at her surroundings.
In the wide lake on the side of the road which had come into view, the water's surface was rippling with the numerous silhouettes of all the fish within it, and trees planted within an enormous orchard were filled with many vivid golden fruit.
The fruit trees' seeds were planted here, but their territory now extended far beyond the orchard.

"Should we camp here, Kino?"

"I'll think about it, Hermes"

Kino and Hermes drove on, heading towards that group of immense buildings they had seen earlier. A flock of birds like nothing they had ever seen took off from the treetops.

In the center of the country, buildings which were a bit too grand were lined up one by one. They were massive stone buildings which had dazzling decorative stones a plenty. Strange stone animal statues jutted out conspicuously from their pointed roofs. The houses were lined up neatly with clear divisions.
The road was wide enough for ten cars to drive side-by-side, and neatly turned into an intersection. Although while driving a motorrad one can not see much, one could tell it was a grand city. And there was no one in it.
Kino, who had stopped Hermes in the middle of the intersection and stood up, started turning her body (and her glance) in a circle.

"..."

The buildings quietly flowed to the side, and other buildings appeared and flowed in to take their place.
Kino, amused at this, turned around five times.

"..."

Then she staggered a bit.

"You won't be able to ride me in that state"

Kino and Hermes began to look around the city.
There really was no one living there. And no other travelers as well.
In a building which seemed like a theater, Kino got up and looked around the stage by herself and Hermes said that that was unfair.
She found a plaza where underground water flowed into the lake and, after checking that the water was clear, found a nearby lodging and committed it to memory so they could camp there that night. It was formerly a store, but within it, she could see where the window glass had shattered to pieces, lay a glass screen-like machine and a bunch of electric machines scattered about.

To the side of them they could see a large stone statue of some king they hadn't heard of, carrying a sword, from it's left elbow onward the statue was completely covered in ivy.

"It looks like he's being eaten." Hermes said, clearly enjoying himself.

Kino and Hermes continued their stroll.

"Ah, now that place has seen better days."

They had come to a building where all the chairs and desks were all wreaked and thrown in disarray, perhaps another traveler took his revenge for something out on them.

"But it kind of suits it. It's too bad for the person who made the chairs though."

Kino turned it into firewood to last out the cold night. Picking suitable pieces of firewood, she put a plank which used to be the overhanging on a door on the pile.

"Well then, I think I'll look around a bit."

Upon saying that, she started up the spiral staircase adorning a round tower nearby with a light gait. From atop the tower the view of the whole country was breath taking, spreading out for miles.

A short time after Kino had said that and gone off, Hermes had started to resent the tower's lack of an elevator. Again, Hermes said this was unfair.
To calm Hermes down, Kino said that she had seen an interesting looking building away from the center of town from the tower, and that they should both check it out. The building looked like it was built differently from the others. It was a tall, cold looking, square building...
"It might be some kind of monument, or serve some other special purpose, and you'll likely be able to go in it and see the interior, so you won't be bored." Kino said.

"Thanks for thinking of me!"

"You're welcome."

And with that they went on until they reached their destination.
The building looked like a huge box, where ever one looked it was completely square. The white, plain outer wall had no windows.

"NATIONAL LIBRARY"

Said the large plaque in the entrance way.
The words were carved in large letters as well. Hermes read the small words under them. Because the words were carved in hard stone, they were still legible tens of hundreds of years later.

"Umm, it says 'Here we preserve all books and storage mediums, so that the works of our generations will be preserved as eternal memories.' ."

Kino immediately said that they should go in now, to which Hermes replied

"Wha! Books are boring!"

Using a cart ramp, pushing along Hermes, who was showing signs of dissatisfaction, Kino passed through a broken glass door and into the building.

Inside was a storehouse full of bookcases. In the cool storehouse, the bookcases reached all the way to the low ceiling, seeming to go on forever. Kino took out an oil lamp she had on hand, but even with the combined light of the oil lamp and Hermes' headlights, the light did not extend very far. This was only the first floor, but all the rest of the floors were the same way,

"These are all books and magazines? They've got a lot here, haven't they.."

Hermes said in a disinterested tone. Incidentally, Kino had unloaded the baggage on Hermes and hid it by the empty entrance way with no one there to receive guests. She found a door within the bookcases and tried to open it. The inside was blocked with tightly stacked books.

"....."

She picked one of the books up, and as she did so, a strange expression appeared on her face. She opened it gently, and the expression became grimmer.

"What is it, Kino?"

Kino showed him the book in silence, and he spoke, seeming to understand.

"It's not that unexpected. Who knows how long since the air conditioning was last turned on. I'm sure moisture from the rain has probably seeped in too. And any that were in the basement are probably just rotten puddles by now"

The book was heavy, with a lavish binding, but the pages had mostly worn away, black with mold and dust. Kino picked up other books to see how they were, and asked Hermes if he could make out any words.

"It's pretty hard...I can make out some letters, but...I can't make out any words."

Kino returned the books to their shelves. As she slid one of the shelves a bit, several books with corroding insides fell and crumbled at her feet, pieces of them were scattered across the floor now.

"...That was no good. It would have been interesting to learn more about this country."

She found that it was no use trying to pick up all the scattered pieces of the books.
She hung the oil lamp on on of Hermes' handlebars and they continued on, slowly.
Paying no attention to Hermes' lack of interest, Kino looked through more bookcases. Simple photograph books were all right, but most of the books were illegible. Pages had rotted, sticking together, making them hard to flip through.
There were places where books had been taken off the shelves and made into huge piles on the floor, and others where perhaps as a prank, or for revenge, piles of books had been set on fire, leaving large piles of ash in places. Maybe another traveler might had come and done these things.

Kino took a few small sighs and finally gave up the search.
In the end, there were no perfectly legible books.
Kino pushed Hermes and headed toward the exit.
There were times when they began lost in the maze of bookcases, but they managed to get close to the exit safely. When they got there,

"What's that room?"

Hermes said while looking at a door that seemed to lead deeper into the building.

After Kino propped Hermes up on his stand, she opened the door, slowly.
After checking that it was safe, she pushed Hermes inside. It was another storage room. In the square room with white walls, again things which looked like bookcases were lined up.
Though in the transparent cases were not books, but round, light silver objects which looked something like plates.

"These are memory disks, aren't they? —Look, we've seen things like these before. The things that can store music and pictures."

Hermes said, as Kino peered into a group of disks.

"These are bad too..."

The cases had cracks in them, and were broken in places. The disks themselves were bent, cracked and the surface was peeling off in places, not one disk was usable. This wasn't a work of a vandal, they had just worn down through the years.

"If even the books are unreadable, the disks, which are even weaker, have no chance, Kino. Even if there was a machine that was able to read the disks, with them in this state..."

While illuminating the disks with the lamp light,

"With the disks like this, no one will ever be able to view the "memories" of those who lived here."

Kino whispered.
Pushing Hermes, Kino headed out of the room.
While she was pushing and pulling, she back pushed against one of the walls and the wall changed directions.

"Hey! Kino, try hitting the back wall."

Hermes spoke up suddenly.

"The wall?"

Kino looked curiously at the wall, propped Hermes on his stand, and shone the oil lamp hanging on his handle at the wall. And there stood nothing but a gap-less white wall. She tried hitting it lightly in various places, but all of them made the same sound. However, then Hermes said immediately,

"There, the last place you hit sounded different than the rest. Something's behind there. Like a cave or something."

Kino took interest at this and began rubbing at the wall. After a short while of searching, nothing out of the ordinary was found. Even so, she kept searching, and at last,

"Found it."

There she found an incredibly small covered door. After trying a lot of different actions, she managed to slide the cover off. There was a keyhole inside. Kino, who had decided that "We came all this way, and we're not leaving until we unlock this thing", slid two pieces of metal into the keyhole and slowly tried to turned them.
If someone were to see this, they would think she was a thief.
Finally, a small sound came from the keyhole and it began to turn.
This time, the wall itself opened wide. Kino quickly moved out of the way, and the opening in the wall hit Hermes' lower end with a boom.

"Ouch!"

"....."

Kino carefully shown the oil lamp at the opening in the wall. And inside,

"It's a disk."

There was a disk.
The disk was inside a clear case, which was inside a clear box, which was inside a larger box, which was inside....and that was inside....
It was like a Russian nesting doll that one would get as a souvenir.
Inside the case within the many boxes, there was the one disk. It had no bends, cracks, or broken parts, and prettily sparkled as the lamp light hit it.

"Incredible. This one might still work!"

Hermes then said excitedly,

"They stored it so thoroughly that they even put it in layers of boxes! Some special kind of storage liquid seems to be in between the boxes too."

Kino looked at the scene silently for a while, and then said suddenly,

"I wonder why..."

"Hm?"

"Why did they go through so much trouble to protect *this* disk, out of all the hundreds of disks? It must have been really important to them..."

"Maybe."

"What kind of images are locked away in there? Images of bustling city streets in a time of plenty? Or maybe, a scene of an ordinary family's child's birthday party, brimming with laughter?"

"Who knows?"

"If someone were to see them, then they would share in the memories of people in this country who are long gone. I wonder how many years it's been? Or maybe, centuries?

"Hmm..."

"But at the very least, one thing is clear."

"What?"

"That person won't be us. Let's leave it hidden here."

"Agreed."

Kino closed the opening in the wall slowly and covered it. The wall was as it had been before, and it became hard to tell where the door was again.
Kino pushed Hermes along and went out of the room. The disks all around the room were tinted yellow with the light of Kino's oil lamp, and flickered in the dark.
When the door was closed, the room was once again plunged into pitch black darkness.

Hundreds, or thousands, or perhaps millions more then that.
An utterly shocking number of stars stretched out and carpeted the sky. There was no moon, so the stars glittered in the sky boisterously with nothing as their equal. On a sheet of grass of what likely used to be a flower bed, with her sleeping bag spread out like a blanket, Kino laid there, face up. Hermes was parked on the side, on some stone paving. There were signs that there had been a camp fire.

"One day..."

Kino opened her mouth.

"One day, it would be nice it the memories of you and me, of our travels together, if they were preserved somehow.... Of Master too. That someone would be able just see them and know. They'd be around forever, like those disks."

"There's no way that could happen."

When Hermes exclaimed that, Kino let out a chuckle.

"Yes, it's impossible. —That's why, at least as long as I'm alive, I'll remember that disk sitting there. That one disk I couldn't peer into the memories of. If I remember that, it's enough."

"Right, so, what are we going to do tomorrow? We're not going to spend two more days here, are we?"

"No. When I get up we'll leave, but it was interesting. I'm glad we came. And, next time, let's go to a country with people living in it."

"Understood."

After Kino and Hermes had left the country, the start of the Rainy Season began.
The whole country became thoroughly drenched. The Dry Season came again, and another traveler came to the country, this time by automobile.
He discovered the National Library, strolled past the bookcases, as Kino had, and was disappointed at the sight of all the worn, crumbling books. Eventually the traveler found that room, and was discouraged by the destroyed disks. In a corner of the room, his feet brushed against a small plate, and he picked it up off the ground. It had dropped when it's cover was opened by himself, about a year ago, but he hasn't seen anyone else around then.
He flipped the plate over, and saw that there where words carved into it's back.

"IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 'BOOK BURNING PROHIBITION LAW' WE WILL CEASE THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL FORMS OF MEDIA. THESE DISKS SHALL BE LEFT AS THEY ARE. HOWEVER, THEY CONTAIN IMAGES OF THE LOWEST, MOST VILE AND BIZARRE CRIMES AND OBSCENITIES, THUS THE VIEWING OF THEM WILL BE ETERNALLY PROHIBITED, AND WE SHALL SEAL THEM AWAY FOR ETERNITY. -THE NATIONAL LIBRARY STAFF"

"So that's it. I wonder what kinds of things are sealed away here... Is it true that they are all stored in this place?"

The dog that accompanied him replied that, unfortunately, he didn't know either.
As the traveler stood in the room, he looked at the numerous damaged disks, and made a strange expression.
And then,

"Well, anyhow...No one will be able to see what's on those disks anymore, will they?"

He sighed.